point of view, he didn't feel that the climate was appropriate for my statements and warned that Senator Jesse Helms and company could use my commentary to continue attacking the NEA. The editor in question is a closeted homosexual who went on to say that because his journal receives funding from the NEA, he might not be able to print my work in future issues. I told him that he should check the source of his funding addictions and consider striving for self-sufficiency. If he's running scared because of Jesse Helms, my comments about Mapplethorpe's images of Black males, and the presence of homoeroticism in my work, then the NEA could make him jump through all kinds of hoops in order to keep his funding secure. He made me realize that there is nothing more detestable than a cowardly, closeted faggot. I hold no regrets about the break in our friendship.

In this same climate of censorship, it should also be noted that the gay author Edmund White feels that it was "so insulting" of me to comment critically about the objectification of Black males in the work of Robert Mapplethorpe. White's comments were made in a San Francisco gay newspaper. The questions raised by his condemnation of my remarks include, *Who has the right to critique popular culture?* Obviously, White doesn't think that Black gay men have such a right, particularly when the critique concerns the sacred cows of gay culture.

Maybe Grandmother knew that I would write "American Wedding" under the auspices of the NEA grant I received in 1986. Yes, it is totally appropriate to celebrate gay desire and affirm gay love with federal money. "American Wedding," which closes the *Conditions* collection, begins: "In america/I place my ring/on your cock/where it belongs." It seemed totally appropriate then (and more so now) that I would not only buy myself the time (with government money) to write that poem, but that I would also subvert the sanctity of the heterosexual wedding ceremony for the affirmation of gay love.

Yes, Grandmother, by now I believe the authorities know that I'm a Black faggot who *won't* hush his mouth. As Alfred Hitchcock once said at the end of one of his TV programs, "It's amazing what you see when you don't have a gun."